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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS, INTER-KOREAN SUMMIT

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage August 16 on DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh's formal announcement Wednesday that former Premier Su Tseng-chang will be his running mate in the 2008 presidential election; on the UN referendum; and on the Taiwan government's decisions to lift the ban on ractopamine residues in pork, and to set up a giant national financial holding company. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a banner headline on page six that said "On UN Referendum, Bian [Says]: the United States Must Not Draw a Red Line on Taiwan's Democracy."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" and an analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" both criticized the Chen Shui-bian administration for allegedly bowing to the U.S. pressure and changing its policies all the time. An op-ed in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" urged the DPP government to manage carefully the United States' attempts to "interfere in" the UN referendum. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News," on the other hand, discussed the upcoming inter-Korean summit and said it shows a "lesson of unity." End summary.

¶3. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

A) "Ractopamine Government"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" editorialized (8/16):

"The Department of Health and the Council of Agriculture announced simultaneously the decision to lift the ban on ractopamine (Paylean) residues in pork, and such a move has triggered considerable criticism, including: [people's] worries that the move would put their health at risk; Taiwan's swine industry would fall apart; ... and that Taiwan has easily bowed to the United States' bully and oppression. ...

"A constantly shifting public policy is the murderer of a government's prestige. Only a muddleheaded and incapable government would change its policies all the time and go back on its word. No wonder some people believe that [the change of policy on ractopamine residues] is a big gift A-Bian gives [to Washington] in exchange for his planned transit in the United States. Should this be the case, it will be penny-wise and pound-foolish."

B) "Policy Changes Whenever Big Brother Opens Its Mouth"

Journalist Cheng Chia-wen noted in an analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (8/16):

"... Ordinarily, the Council of Agriculture and the Department of Health tend to give eloquent remarks [about the government's policy and position]. But when it comes to U.S. agricultural imports - be

it genetically-modified soybeans or corn, apples containing codling moth larva, beef produced in areas plagued with mad cow disease, wheat containing Malathion residue, or the ractopamine issue this time - once the [U.S.] 'Big Brother' opens its mouth, our government's attitude will change dramatically within a few days from asserting [Taiwan's] dignity of righteousness and sticking to its position to accepting whatever [the United States] requests. ..."

C) "Managing US Response to UN Bid"

Liu Kuan-teh, a Taipei-based political commentator, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (8/15):

"... The difference between the US and Chen's positions [over the UN referendum] has resulted in a clear political deadlock. More rhetoric and political gestures are likely to emerge in the next couple of months, with the Bush administration taking measures to force Chen to make concessions on the referendum. ... Therefore, Chen, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) leadership and most importantly, DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh, must formulate a coherent message emphasizing that the referendum in fact is a positive indication of the level of Taiwan's democratic progress. Since the Chinese Nationalist Party has also supported a referendum on using 'appropriate names' to return the UN, this united voice must be heard around the world. ..."

"The US' attempts to interfere in the referendum should be managed carefully and relations between the US and Taiwan should not be sacrificed in the course of the drive to attain membership in the UN. There is room for adjusting the theme and working the referendum in order to rebuild trust between Taipei and Washington. Chen and his government can use this wiggle room as a bargaining chip to negotiate with their US counterparts."

14. Inter-Korean Summit

"Korean Summit Shows Lesson of Unity"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (8/16):

"... Hence, the decision by both Roh and Kim to hold the first inter-Korean summit meeting in seven years aims to both deflect intensifying domestic political pressures and attract further attention in the international community over the sharply different problems faced by the two regimes and peoples on the Korean peninsula. ... The effects are already beginning to surface. For example, the campaign in South Korea for the year-end elections has already begun to become slanted toward the inter-Korean summit and passions over the question of Korean unification have again been sparked and the prospective summit has also given a shot of stimulation and unity to the chronically politically fractured and fractious National Assembly. On the external front, the United States, the PRC and Japan have separately expressed a high degree of anticipation for the prospects of a renewal of the inter-Korean peace process and predictions are being to be voiced over a revival of the flow of international capital and resources into famine stricken North Korea. ..."

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